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TESTIMONY OF RICHARD WECHTER, CMCA, BEFORE THE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 17, 2023, IN SUPPORT OF HB-5244-AN ACT AUTHORIZING MUNICIPALITIES TO ESTABLISH A PROPERTY ABATEMENT FOR CERTAIN CONDOMINIUM UNITS

I am a Senior Vice President and Community Association Manager at Westford Real Estate Management, LLC where I currently manage approximately 638 condominium units. I hold a designation as a Certified Manager of Community Associations. I am also a member of the Legislative Action Committee of the Connecticut Chapter of the Community Associations Institute. Most importantly, I have been a condominium unit owner for over thirty-three years in a Connecticut community association in which the municipality does not provide refuse pick-up or snow removal.

The General Assembly SHOULD adopt HB-5244. I strongly believe this proposed legislation addresses a long-standing inequity in municipalities between community association homeowners and private homeowners in which community association homeowners are not receiving essential municipal services such as refuse pick-up and snow removal while receiving no adjustment of their property taxes for the lack of such service directly from the municipality as owners of private homes receive.

Opposition to this legislation raise a number of claims, all without merit.

It has been first asserted that the adoption of this bill will force municipalities to base property taxes on the level of services provided to residents rather than based upon the value of their properties. This is patently false. This proposed legislation does not require a change in the manner in which property taxes are arrived at. It simply proposes that community association homeowners who do not receive essential municipal services such as refuse pick-up and snow removal receive an adjustment in their property taxes due to the long-standing absence of those services that the rest of the municipality receives as part of their property taxes.

It is next asserted that the adoption of this legislation would open the door for community association homeowners to assert the right to a tax abatement for the non-use of the municipal schools, parks, athletic fields, etc. To even restate this assertion is to point out its absurdity. The essence of the proposed legislation is essential municipal services that are provided to some, but not all municipal residents. All municipal residents can avail themselves of the municipal schools, parks and athletic fields. However, community association homeowners have never been able to avail themselves of essential municipal services such as refuse pick-up and snow removal. Community association homeowners are simply asking to finally be treated, not as second-class citizens of their respective municipalities, but rather, as equals to their private home neighbors.

It is next asserted that the proposed legislation would cause havoc on the municipal property tax system and unfairly shift a greater tax burden onto other property taxpayers. This is an argument promoting

hysteria, not logic or reason. Abatements would result in fair adjustments of property taxes by spreading the cost of essential services to all property taxpayers in a municipality rather than the current situation in which community association homeowners incur costs to have their refuse picked-up and their roadways cleared of snow by private companies at their expense while their neighbors in private homes just have to sit back and watch the municipality perform those services without any additional cost to the private homeowner. That is the classic definition of unfair, not the made-up claim of those that oppose this legislation.

For the reasons stated above, I am in full support of HB-5244, AN ACT AUTHORIZING MUNICIPALITIES TO ESTABLISH A PROPERTY ABATEMENT FOR CERTAIN CONDOMINIUM UNITS

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to offer this testimony.

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard Wechter, CMCA, Senior Vice President

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Westford Real Estate Management, LLC and a Thirty-Three Year Community Association Unit Owner